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CERTIFICATION OF STATE REGISTER LISTING

The Register of Historic Kansas Places includes all Kansas properties nominated to the National Register as well as lower threshold properties which are listed on the state register only.

Property Name: Northbranch Store

Address:

Legal: Section 8, Range 9, Township 1

County: Jewell

Owner: Erma L. Dillon

Address: RR1, Box 43, Burr Oak, KS 66936

National Register eligible _____

State Register eligible ✓

This property was approved by the Kansas Historic Sites Board of Review for the Register of Historic Kansas Places on August 24, 2002.

I hereby certify that this property is listed on the Register of Historic Kansas Places.

Richard D. Farkent
State Historic Preservation Officer

8/26/02
Date

9/95

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National Park Service

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The Northbranch Store (c. 1882, 1896) is a one story gabled roof wooden structure sitting on a limestone block for foundation. A corrugated metal roof covers the building, a pent roof porch covered with corrugated metal spans the facade. A double parapetted facade distinguishes the building. An unfinished cellar with dirt floor and walls stands underneath this building. Access to the cellar is achieved by climbing down a ladder in a dug hole on the north side of the building. At some unknown point in time the wooden roof was covered with tin. There are the remains of three brick chimneys which were originally used with wood burning stoves. Located in the unincorporated hamlet of Northbranch, the property stands on Lots 1 and the West 1/2 of 2 in Block Six, Section 8, Township 1, Range 9, Jewell County, Kansas.

In 1896 the original building was joined with another building of nearly equal size on its the east side. The second building having been a business building about a block north of said intersection. Thus the two buildings became one with a common wall between the two. The combined buildings measure fifty feet from north to south and forty four feet from west to east. There is an unfinished attic over each side of the combined building with the original access being the use of a ladder. The east attic has 24 inch centers for the rafters and is seven feet, eight inches from floor to peak. A stairway has been added for access to this portion. The west attic is not readily accessible, but is no doubt similar to the east attic. The building currently houses a variety of left over "junk" since the previous owner housed and sold antiques there. The building is basically in its original structural form.

The building's exterior walls are composed of wood boxing with an overlay of five inch lap siding. The south side has four large windows with an inset of double entry doors in each half of the combined building. These doors have outside screen doors with a space of two feet between them and the inset entry doors. The north side has had a "lean-to" built on to house vehicles. This is the only change to the basic original building. There is a large window near the back on the west side and three small windows on the east side. Above the open porch across the south side is a plain facade built to tie the appearance of the two buildings together.

The interior of the building is comprised of the combined buildings, the west one being all one large room, and the east side has been divided into four "rooms." In early days these rooms were used to house a creamery and egg candling facility where cream and eggs were bought and sold. One of the rooms was used to store large sacks of flour and other commodities sold at the store. At one time the east side also housed a furniture store. In the 1950s the east half was made into an apartment where the owners lived. Propane was then used for cooking and heating in that portion.

The retail area measures approximately fifty feet north and south and twenty two feet east and west. One foot wide shelves (not original) line twenty five feet on each the east and west walls. A portion of the original counter remains, along with a couple of meat cases and a large David Bradley egg cooler.

The interior walls are plastered. At some point in time (probably at least 50 years ago) the ceiling was covered with a type of wallboard. The wooden floor is original three inch tongue and groove pine flooring.

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The Northbranch Store (c. 1882, 1896) is being nominated to the National Register under criterion A for its historical association with the growth and development of Northbranch. This was the first store built in the new settlement first called Quaker Point, then changed to North Branch. Previously there was a small stock of groceries in the home of D.H. Dillon. Thus, the store was quite an addition to the village and neighboring community for in those days travel was very limited (horse and buggy) and the next closest town was 10 miles away. Roads were almost nonexistent, so trips for the local community to anywhere but North Branch were few and far between.

The village of North Branch came into existence after a group of people of the Quaker faith settled in the area, some shortly before 1872 and more shortly after that. Quakers were known for their interest in education and thus an Academy was started in the village in 1889. It was the first high school in Jewell County. Among those early Quakers were the Dillon families who were very industrious and instrumental in building the town of North Branch, giving land for the church and cemetery and helping start the church and Academy, along with building and owning various businesses and land in the local area.

Dillon H. Dillon obtained 80 acres of land from the land office at Kirwin, Kansas (The original papers are in the museum in Northbranch). It is on a portion of his land, Lots 1 and the West 1/2 of 2 in Block Six, Section 8, Township 1, Range 9, Jewell County, Kansas this store building was built in May/June, 1882. It opened with a wide array of merchandise needed at that time.

The building was built by Alfred McKinney, a local builder who was also a recorded minister of the Conservative Friends faith. Rev. McKinney was born 16 October, 1832 in Stokes County, North Carolina, moved to Iowa in 1854 where he married in 1856. He, with his wife and family of five children moved to the North Branch area sometime after 1876. Here he became a recorded minister. The two older children married in the North Branch community. Alfred and his wife, Katherine, moved to Saffordville, Ks in the late 1880's where he died on 9 July 1888 as a result of injuries in a fall from a ladder. He is buried in the Cottonwood Cemetery in Lyon County, KS.

This building does not have significant architectural importance except for its basic original state which includes square nails used in the construction. However, it is a great landmark and in the center of the little village of Northbranch.

The first Post Office was called Quaker Point and was located 1/2 mile east in the Postmaster's home. This man moved to Idaho, the Postal Department changed the name to North Branch and Dillon H. Dillon became the second postmaster. He moved the PO into his home and then in 1882 he moved it into this, his new store building a bit further west at the intersection of Highland and Main. Over the years the Post Office was moved to various locations depending on who the Postmaster was. Several times it moved back into this building.

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Dillon sold his business to J. W. Beeman in 1893 and in 1896 Beeman moved and joined another building of nearly equal size onto the east side of the original building.

It was in this building where the first Presidential election was held in North Branch, that in 1916.

For a few years around 1915-1920 the store became a Farmer's Union where a few locals held stocks in it and hired someone to manage the business. This did not prove satisfactory.

This building housed a wide array of merchandise including groceries, dry goods, hardware and other necessities of early days. It housed a creamery where farmers brought their cream and eggs to town to "do their trading" - where they traded cream and eggs for groceries, etc. My 97 year old father in law remembers of seeing a customer in the store write a check to pay for his groceries - this was a first for Dad as his parents always brought cream and eggs and traded for groceries, usually having some cash left over to take home along with their week's groceries. There was a place to store large blocks of ice which was purchased in Red Cloud, NE and brought every day for customers to buy to keep foods cool or make homemade ice cream.

This store, being the largest in the village, was always a significant focal point in the community and especially the village. From 1889 until 1942 the Quaker Academy was just two blocks from the store. During school terms the village population doubled as students came and lived in dormitories. Thus, the store was a place students could walk to and purchase a candy bar, gum etc - and just maybe get to walk with someone that would one day become their spouse. Many of those years were good times for the business, however during the 1930s, the term "dust bowl" was very real in Northbranch and times were tough as it is an agricultural community.

Times were so hard then that the Academy had to close for a couple of years as there was no money to send students to a private school. This made an adverse impact on the store business as well. However, it was kept open for business from the time it was built until the late 1980s. My father was the last to keep a line of groceries. He closed them out in the 1960s. While still in the grocery business he began collecting and selling antiques which he continued with until the late 1980s. Thus, over a century of business in the building! The store was never open on Sundays, but some holidays were a time of celebration in the village with band concerts at the main intersection and various other activities that held the interest of the locals. Most, if not all, of its years in business there were no cigarettes or beer sold.

Due to a thinning population, better roads and other high schools in the area the Academy closed in 1942. The large building was torn down and in 1950 a new church was built over part of the existing basement. This church is still a strong and influential congregation.

The store was a school bus stop where many students of the late 1940s to the 1970s gathered to wait for the bus

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ride to school in Burr Oak. Here they could buy all kinds of pop, candy bars and other snacks.

Another important part this building held was a place where the local (usually men) gathered around the old pot bellied stove and traded stories of the day or of yesteryear while they waited for the mail to be put into their Post Office boxes! In the early 1960s the store owner had a little bar where hamburgers, coffee and homemade pie were served.

The writer's father-in-law, who is nearly 98 years old tells of going to town 15 miles away about once or twice a year to get wheat ground into flour. He has been an excellent source of information on those early days. Another source of information is the original typed writings by a lady who lived in Northbranch all of her life, living to be past 90 years. This collection is the property of the writer, who has visited with her many times about the early days of North Branch.

This store, in its earliest days, stocked and sold a good variety of everything from groceries to drygoods to clothes to hardware, but no tobacco or alcohol. Across the street was a warehouse where buggies were sold. That building is long gone. During the 1930s and until the 1960s it was basically a grocery store. The writer's father and mother owned and operated it from 1959, selling groceries, (always keeping fresh meats in the meat case, eggs in the cooler and pop in the old Coke machine), gasoline at the pumps out in front, and kerosene, hand pumped from a tank on the front porch. A large supply of bolts was also available (some boxes of new bolts are still there). They also had a snack bar along the east wall near the back where they served hamburgers, homemade pie and coffee. The Post Office was housed in a corner at the back so again this became a popular place for the locals and others just passing through town to stop and drink coffee, eat a piece of pie and visit. Much of the time the conversations were reminiscing about the "good ole days".

After it was no longer feasible to keep the grocery line the writer's father began filling the shelves and every available space with antiques - some of which are still there. Since his passing his children have had several flea market days to clear out the store.

There are less than 20 people living in Northbranch today. Besides the church, there is a beauty shop and a guest house called "Lizzie's House" where there are bedrooms, a kitchen and bath rented to overnight guests, hunters, genealogists or whoever may happen through wanting a quiet place to spend the night. Lizzie's House also has a room where antiques, etc are sold. Another room houses a large collection of Northbranch memorabilia, pictures, scrapbooks, Academy annuals, etc. collected for many years.

Today the building is very much in disrepair, but it is believed to be restorable. Should this dream become a reality it would make a wonderful place to house the museum, have a coffee shop, a craft and gift shop, or a number of other ideas. Northbranch holds much, much history with widespread appreciation from the past and an exciting look into the future.

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Bibliography

Auction Notices. June 11, 1963, July 2, 1977.

Burr Oak Reveille, May 19, 1882.

Dillon, Erma. Personal interviews with Walter Dillon, Edith Folger, and Francis McKinney.

Folger, Edith L. Written Notes, nd.

Northbranch Academy Handbook. 1892- 93, 1895- 96, 1904- 05.

Northbranch Academy Annual. 1928, 1940.

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is located in Section 7, Township 1 South, Range 9 West of Walnut Township on Lot 1 and west 25 feet of Lot 2, Block 6, Northbranch, Jewell County, Kansas. The property is bounded to the south by Main Street and to the west by Highland. To the north and east, the property is bounded by adjacent property lines.

Boundary Justification

All property historically associated with the Northbranch Store is included in this nomination.